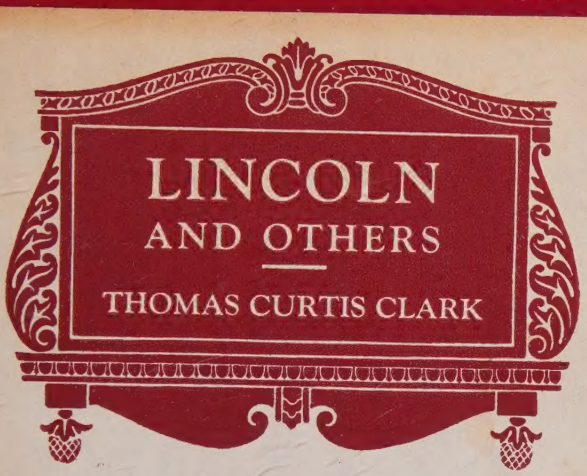
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THOMAS CURTIS CLARK

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LINCOLN AND OTHERS

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LINCOLN AND OTHERS. II

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TO

MY MOTHER

Grateful acknowledgment is hereby made to *The Living Church, The Christian Century, The Boston Transcript, The Chicago Tribune, The Chicago Post* and other publications in which many of the poems included in this book originally appeared; also to James T. White & Company, New York, for permission to reprint a number of poems first published in my earlier volume, "Love Off to the War and Other Poems."

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Lincoln

Wise with the wisdom of ages,
Shrewd as a man of trade,
Grim as the prophets and sages,
Keen as a damask blade;

Firm as a granite-ribbed mountain,
Tender as woman's song;
Gay as a scintillant fountain—
Yet was he oaken-strong.

Here, the wonder of æons:
Born unto pain and strife;
Dead, 'mid a thousand pæans,
Deathless, he enters life.

The Miracle

The wild Kentucky hills were touched of God,
And lo! a child was born. His sires, unknown,
Dreamed not that God would for their tears atone
By raising from their midst a king. The sod
On which they walked was cursed to them,
Begrudging them their bread, for all their toil;
But it was holy ground; for from that soil
Should come a chosen one; the diadem
Upon his brow should be no piece of gold,
But, like his lowly Lord's, a thorny crown.
Upon his cross he died; they took him down,
And lo! they found, before the day was old,
That they had crucified their one true friend:
Despite their hate, he loved them to the end.

At Gentryville

From these dark streets flamed forth a brilliant
light,
This miry clay produced a mighty tree,
From this rude town emerged the bravest knight
That ever fought for human liberty.
Can it have been he found his splendid dream
Amid these shacks, where giant rats run wild?
Perhaps from heaven a high, prophetic gleam
Ensnared his heart, the while he thought and smiled.
This very spot was where he laughed and talked;
They say he whittled, whiling hours away.
His naked feet these slimy alleys walked,
And in this hut, perhaps, he learned to pray.
This is the tale of tales since time began—
How squalor travailed and brought forth a man!

Greatheart

They took small note of him, the great, the wise,
the rich,
Who saw him come from Illinois, a wild, crude
State—
A country lawyer to decide a Nation's fate!
They held him foolish to accept so high a niche—
What, President! Unkempt, unlearned and unre-
fined
They called him, and withdrew for private talk.
They joked about his ancestry, and by his walk
They feigned to guess his farmer lineage. How
blind
Were they who could not see the fire that burned
within
Those glowing eyes, who failed to note the mighty
strength
Of those toil-hardened arms! His gaunt limbs'
sprawling length
Should have proclaimed to them a giant's stride!
Their sin
Was not to know the great, enduring heart of him,
Our most beloved, whose fame the ages cannot dim.

At Gettysburg

The whole world came to hear him speak that day
And all the ages sent their scribes to see
And hear what word the new land had to say
Of God and man and truth and liberty.
Homer was there and Socrates and Paul,
Shakespeare and Luther, Pitt, Cavour and Bright,
With Washington—stanch friends of freedom all;
Nor did he fail: he lifted there a light
For all the earth to see, from fires of truth
That surged within his breast. Yet that crude throng
Of men knew not that through this man uncouth
God spake as through old prophets, stern and strong.
They turned away, these men, but angels bent
From heaven to hear those flaming words, God-sent.

The Democrat

Upon him fell a heritage of hate,
And he, who loved the fields of rustling corn,
Took up the load; and then a thought was born—
A thought that soon would shake the walls of state.
The dream was his, that government should be
Unselfish as the morning sun;
Unwearying, alert, lest wrong be done
To any man or child. No vanity
Of pomp or power could move him from his will
To champion the cause of truth in public life.
He bent him to his task; but in the strife
That noble form was felled. His foes could kill
The mortal man, they could not stay his dream,
Which now, on darkened earth, casts far its gleam.

The Tragedy

The wisdom of old Plato was in him;
Isaiah's vision lit his way of life;
A strength like mighty Samson's met the strife
His day decreed: and still he was not grim,
For in his face the love of Jesus shone,
And in his hand was grace and tenderness;
He had no thought except to give and bless,
His human smile could melt a heart of stone.
And yet, alas! he walked a path of woe;
Despised, accursed, he wore a thorny crown;
When all the world proclaimed his high renown,
A madman's bullet hissed and laid him low.
One other crime was dastardly as this—
When Judas damned his Savior with a kiss.

The Revelation

He walked among us and we passed him by
And thought him but a country lawyer, crude
As our red prairies are, and more than rude,
Who revelled in his jokes and deviltry.
We could not know the heart within that breast
Until the blood flowed freely from the wound
A traitor made; then was it that we found
That God had loaned us for a time His Best.
And now the nations, since their kings are gone,
Have taken him across the wide-flung sea
To rule their hearts as well as ours; to be
The goal of their desires, with breaking dawn.

The Hand of Lincoln[1]

This hand grew strong by felling stubborn trees
That barred the way of freedom for our sires;
And here in Illinois it lit the fires
That should destroy those age-long dynasties
Of vested right and selfish power that broke
The spirit of a race. He saw their grief
With deep, sad eyes, and vowed their sure relief—
And then the Voice of God and Freedom spoke!
This hand clinched hard the tyrant's rod of hate
And tore it from his grasp. A people's prayer
Went up to God, who seeing their despair
Had sent to them a Friend both good and great.

[1] Written after viewing a cast of Lincoln's right hand.

The Christian

His foes declared him blasphemous, perverse,
Ignoring God and heedless of His word.
They said he lacked in fineness, who preferred
To market jokes, rude stories to rehearse.
He was no white-robed saint: a strong man he
Who loved to wrestle with the devil's brood
That lurked behind the fashions of the good.
He scorned all shams, and for hypocrisy
He held a hatred such as Christ alone,
The scourge of haughty Pharisees, could know.
Those painted masks of Christians felt his blow,
And at his blameless name each cast a stone.
Not by their words, but by their fruits, said He,
Who also knew the sting of calumny.

The Master

We need him now—his rugged faith that held
Fast to the rock of truth through all the days
Of toil and strife, the sleepless nights; upheld
By very God was he—that God who stays
All hero-souls who will but trust in Him,
And trusting, labour as if God were not.
His eyes beheld the stars, clouds could not dim
Their glory; but his task was not forgot:
To keep his people one; to hold them true
To that fair dream their fathers willed to them—
Freedom for all; to spur them; to renew
Their hopes in bitter days; strife to condemn.
Such was his task, and well his work was done—
Who willed us greater tasks, when set his sun.

The World's Verdict

One sent out his ships to earth's farthest shores,
And brought to his coffers the Orient's stores;
The wild desert sands
Became gold in his hands;
And the world called him Genius—and wondered.

One sought out the secrets of planet and star;
He revelled in problems of granite and spar;
He hungered to know
All the earth could bestow;
And the world called him Scholar—and praised him.

One looked on a suffering, down-trodden race;
He wept as he gazed upon each troubled face;
He heeded their plea,
And he set their hands free;
And the world called him Brother—and loved him.

Shackleton

Your goal was not some island of the blest,
A zone of gardens, sweet with pink and chrome;
You had no thought to find at last a home
Where you might pause, by labours unoppprest:
Fearless and strong, you set upon your quest;
Ice-fanged the ways that lured your dauntless ship,
Endless the night that held you in its grip,
But stout the heart that beat within your breast.
You were of Norman breed, bold viking soul;
You rode the icebergs as a summer sea;
Their crystal peaks, their cold, strange mystery
Lured on and on—then death revealed your goal:
You dropped your anchor, dared the ghastly shade,
And faced your Captain, calm and unafraid.

Theodore Roosevelt, Warrior

In early years your valiant fight began,
When in the wilds you sought the boon of health;
Your spirit then revealed a brimming wealth
Of faith and force, which told the coming man.
In later days, more confident and strong,
You chose to serve where public storms were rife:
You strove with zeal to free the Nation's life
From lust of office, greed and vested wrong.
When flames of war enveloped half the world,
When truth was throttled by a crazy king,
You seized the lash, and whipped us, loitering,
And roused our might, till hell was backward hurled.
You proved a victor to your last life breath;
You could not stay the subtle warrior, Death.

To Carl Sandburg

Your songs are born of tragedy and moil;
Not yours the lyrics of romantic love,
Light sung; your muse is not a woodland dove
With poignant notes of loveliness. Hard toil
And bending backs and bitter oaths you sing.
You chant the fears of fathers, homeless, worn;
You sing the tears of mothers, anxious, torn
By poverty; and children, whom the sting
Of winter marks for early death—they lift
Their hearts to you. Yours is the priceless gift
Of sympathy; you crave for men the bloom
Of life, its roses and its songs. You doom
With your strong voice the robbers of the marts
Who build their wealth on shards of human hearts.

To Walt Whitman

You had no zest for lilting roundelays
Of perfumed love and highly spiced romance;
Your thought was anchored in the wide expanse
Of universal being. Let the praise
For slender songs and sonnets be to those
Who know not high adventure, smug, content
To be within life's study-windows pent,
Past which no wind of great emotion blows.
Your thought was tidal, and your dreams were drenched
With seas tempestuous and thunder-rocked.
Your arm with Neptune's arm was interlocked
As you strode—then as now—with youth unquenched.
No idle singer of an empty day,
You hold, with sun and stars, your cosmic way.

Shakespeare

On Avon's bank he dwelt, yet in his heart
He carried all the world of mortal men.
His fellows were no more within his ken
Than Antony and Cæsar. He was part
Of mankind's cosmos, and no soul was strange
To him. The jealous Moor, Macbeth the king
Of blood, the luckless Jew, all suffering
The pangs of this earth life, were in the range
Of his great heart; and with sad Hamlet he,
Our chief philosopher, would read the scroll
Of human life aright. The tortured soul
Of Lear brought grief to him, in sympathy
The greatest of them all who, English-bred,
Have been by all mankind inherited.

In Shakespeare's Town

In this old town, by Avon's quiet stream,
Great Shakespeare dwelt, and built, of fact and dream,
His deathless plays. Within these simple walls
He sat and mused, and lo! dark castle halls,
High palaces and gruesome caves were there,
To tell their tales of lords and ladies fair,
Of clowns and shepherds; fairies swarmed about,
Dread armies thronged and put their kings to rout;
And even witches hovered at his side
With presage dire; fair maidens loved and died,
And mad philosophers held forth with him
In argument of life; in battles grim
Brave knights went down, while cruel lances gleamed—
Thus life went by, while Shakespeare sat and dreamed.

On Rereading Keats

The dew was on your brow, fair child of dawn;
Your vision was unwearied by the day,
Which wears upon us sore who tread the way
From youth to age. Earth's woe lay light upon
Your buoyant heart, which had the native grace
To carry spring into the winter drear.
Life's discords changed to music for your ear,
As sorrow bloomed in smiles upon your face.
Ah! would your gift were ours, whose souls are dead,
Slain by the subtle fiends of greed and pride;
Love on a golden cross is crucified,
And from the harp of life the song has sped.
Breathe into us, who faint, your vital breath;
Release our spirits from the gyves of death.

To Homer, Poet Eternal

They said, O Grecian bard, that you were blind,
But they were wrong who spread that foolish tale.
Your eyes saw far; no narrow Attic vale
Could bar your view; as freely as the wind
Your vision scanned the utmost bounds of earth;
Time's bulwarks fell before your magic gaze,
And lo! you glimpsed all life. These latest days
Applaud you: seven cities claim your birth,
O bard, a thousand cities hold you dear.
Your reach is as the goings of the sun,
Which scorns no distant nook. Your course shall run
Still on and on, until the last dim year
When man shall be no more, when time shall be
A scroll rolled up, and lost eternally.

A Song for Morning

Makers of poems limpid and lilting,
Strummers of tunes romantic and tearful,
Learn the fresh music of mountains gigantic,
Heed the wild runes of the free-bounding rivers;
Hark to the corn song that bursts from the prairie—
Song old as nature, dewy as morning,
Song everlasting, regenerating,
Sung by our sires in pioneer cabins,
Hummed by our mothers, by Indians threatened,
Over the cradles of bourgeoning peoples.

Learn the new chants of times democratic,
Free as the ocean, strong as the tempest;
Sing the new life of comrades close-tethered;
Sing the new love that leaps over mountains,
Crossing the sea and flooding like sunrise.

Makers of poems limpid and lilting,
Leave the old tunes of vanishing nations,
Learn the fresh songs of a new world affection,
Chant the new music of brothers and lovers.

When April Comes

When April comes, and on the air
Is wafted forth an incense rare
Which tells of gardens lately blown,
Of orchard trees with beauty strown,
The pink of apple, peach and pear,—
Then earth becomes a place so fair
That men forget their weight of care;
For who could nurse a heart of stone
When April comes!

Then happiness is everywhere,
Our very breathing kills despair.
Although we know some glad hopes sown
Shall still be hopes, with summer flown,
Yet smiles and posies shall we wear,
When April comes.

Spring Song

With my ear pressed to the earth,
  Long I held my breath and listened,
Till the last snow flurry fled,
  And the last frost blossom glistened;
And I heard it, yes, I heard it,
  Heard her voice of mirth and laughter;
And I saw her tripping toward me
  With her rose girls coming after—
Spring, the queen of love and longing,
With her nymphs of beauty thronging.

As she sped along the path,
  Sunbeams hastened to caress her;
And the gentle winds, long prisoned,
  Vied, impassioned, to possess her;
Violets, forget-me-nots,
  Bloodroot and anemones,
Sprang from every spot she touched,
  And the barren apple trees
Burst again in tinted glory
Freed from Winter's sceptre hoary.

April

For lyric springtime we have waited long
Whose hearts as well as heads have felt the blast:
From sorrowing our lips had lost their song
Till April topped the hill and brought at last
The welcome news, which made our hearts beat fast—
The news that winter had been bound and slain,
That spring and song and joy were come to earth again.

And now that April, with her birds, is here,
All care shall be forgot; sweet song shall lead
Through waking orchards, where the dawning year
Prepares a feast of beauty for our need.
Our feet rejoice to press the freshening mead
As we again explore the land of dreams,
Of gay romance, by youthtime's clear and singing streams.

The north wind lurks no more; he journeys now
Beyond the hostile reaches of the sun,
Who soon, for our delight, shall trim each bough

With rose and snow. He yields in power to none,
That kingly orb of light: his race begun,
The fields shall laugh again, all tongues shall sing,
And heaven itself rejoice in earth's new blossoming.

Song

I said in my heart,
My lonely heart,
"All love is dead";
But behold! a friend
Brought a wealth of cheer,
And gave me bread.

I said in my heart,
My aching heart,
"God sends but night";
Then the sun shone forth
And enwrapped the earth
In golden light.

I said in my heart,
My breaking heart,
That death is king;
And behold! the earth
Felt the south wind's warmth,
And lo! 'twas spring!

Apocalypse

There's enough of God
In the heart of a rose,
In the smile of a child,
In the dewy blossom of dawn,
To prove
That beauty is the soul of Him,
That love is His sceptre,
And that all things created by Him
Face, not the night,
But an eternal morning.

Friendliness

The wonder of the mighty pyramids,
  The stateliness of Athens' noblest shrine,
The majesty of Taurus, grim and old,
  The grandeur of the castles by the Rhine—
I quite forget them all if I may hear
A purple martin's note of friendly cheer.

In Blossom-Time

In blossom-time, can any say
That life is desolate and gray?
When cherry boughs are drifted snow,
When springtime couriers, singing, go
Through orchard lanes, which for a day
Are very heaven, who could lay
Upon the gods of far-away
One word of blame for fret or woe—
In blossom-time?

What man could hate or envy know
When apple-blossoms burst and blow?
When, free at last, the kindly May
Endeavours Winter's debts to pay—
In blossom-time?

Poet to Cynic

You rail, proud cynic, at the songs we sing;
You say the world cares nothing for our lays,
Reserving for old Omar all your praise.
That may be true; but, when the winter's sting
At last is tamed, and when the joyous spring
Returns to earth, long desolate and cold,
And bids the lilies, bursting from the mould,
Proclaim that Beauty lives—then do you fling
Your heartless jibes at those who hear the song,
Who see the gleam, who trust the springtime hope?
Let those who will, in faithless silence grope—
And let those sing whose hearts with faith are strong!

To John Burroughs

In Memory

We waste our days with creeds and empty words,
Pretending God will give attention due.
Alas, He does not hear! He turned to you,
Who knew and loved His roses and His birds.
You had no time for proudly pious vows,
So humbled were you by the dawn's surprise.
You searched no book for miracles: your eyes
Found wonders strange among the blossomed boughs.
Bequeath to us your wisdom, prophet sage,
That we at last may learn the way of life,
That we may not be stifled by the strife
Of brutal men, in this inglorious age.
Although your feet now tread immortal ways,
Your spirit still shall light our clouded days.

Blind

Oh, falsely pious, bound with sombre vows,
You rail at beauty, hold it sin to smile;
'Tis all in vain the Maytime wreathes its boughs
With snowy bloom—you hold your eyes the while
To musty books! How can you reconcile
Your dull, grey faith with these gold-sprinkled ways,
With this gay orchard beauty, mile on mile?
Your God is not the God of these ambrosial days,
When every bush and tree is full of joy and praise.

The Poet's Call

By day the fields and meadows cry,
  By night the bright stars plead;
He hears the message from on high,
  And to the call gives heed.

The roses tremble as he nears,
  And cry, "Rejoice, rejoice!"
The rocks break forth as he appears,
  "God sends a Voice, a Voice!"

To Wordsworth

The daisies and the dancing daffodils
Were friends of yours; to you all things were fair
In heaven and earth, God's thoughts were everywhere:
And yet your chief delights were woods and hills.
You walked, elate, amid their peaceful shade,
Though war was raging in the land of kings;
Your mind was set on dawns and flowering springs,
On sunny noons, whose light can never fade
For him whose thought is high as are the skies.
How much we need you now, great poet heart!
You learned to live within, to dwell apart,
Content with stars and morning's glad surprise.
Look now on us, whose frettings never cease,
And point the way to reverence and peace.

Blind Eyes

"Great Pan is dead!" they cried. And sad-robed
priests
In long processions gloried in his death.
But even as they went their way, the breath
Of God blew over hill and vale, and feasts
Of loveliness were set for men. June spread
Upon the earth a carpeting of green,
And where was bleakness, fields of gold were
seen.
The priests saw not: they cried, "Great Pan is
dead!"

Up and Down the River

Up and down the river,
In these Junetime days,
Fairy dreams and voices
Haunt the grassy ways.

There are songs for sadness,
There are smiles for tears,
There is balm for sorrow,
Peace for troubled years.

Still some posies linger
In the shady nooks,
And the birds teach wisdom
Never found in books.

Daisies throng the meadow
Yonder where the sun
Tells the happy neighbours
Summer's well begun.

Up and down the river
Who could hint at grief
Where dear, loving Nature
Speaks through every leaf!

Though to-morrow bring me
Care and shadows grey,
Up and down the river—
There's my heart to-day.

King of an Acre

A king of bluest blood am I,
Though gold and purple pass me by;
By right divine I wield the rod
Above this realm of sod and clod.

My palace home is passing plain—
A simple cottage by the lane;
Beneath its roof what hours are spent
Of kingly thought and proud content!

My Queen, what royal garb has she—
The robes of worth and purity;
A rod of love her fair hands hold,
A sceptre mightier than of gold.

No hunting grounds my kingdom knows:
I find fair sport in fat bean rows,
And in the maze of bush and vine,
And tangled wealth of eglantine.

What need have I of golden crown,
Of jewelled throne or fair renown?
I look at none with jealous eye,
For who has more of sun and sky?

Oh, who would not a monarch be
Of cot and hearth, of bush and tree!
He shall not ask a beggar's dole
Who has an acre—and his soul.

Dawn

The long, long night has passed;
  The hills are touched with gold;
Come, let us feed our hearts
  Before the day grows old.
All rapturous the world—
  But lo! the charm has gone:
The greedy sun has had its fill
  From the glory-feast of dawn.

Fundamentals

A little house, a bush, a tree;
A laughing child to play with me.

A task that fills the fragrant days,
But leaving time for prayer and praise.

A garden bright with pink and gold,
Full harvest as the year grows old.

For every day some bookly gain;
For twilight, music's sweet refrain.

A dozen friends with gifts of cheer,
And love, more tender year by year.

With these, and springtime at the door—
What mortal man could ask for more!

The Kingdom

Where is the Kingdom? asked the pompous priest,
Weighted with lore, and spent with fast and feast.
The lowly Christ on his pretensions smiled,
And simply said, "In the heart of a little child."

Hut Happiness

Let men of pride rush madly on and on,
And men of daring sail the vengeful sea;
In this plain hut, with quietude of dawn
And starry eve my friends, is joy for me.

The hollyhocks are comrades I can trust,
The daisies never fail me in my need;
Content and health enhance my scanty crust;
Though poor in gold, my soul is rich indeed.

To a Thousand Year Old Elm

What stories you could tell, enduring tree,
Of men and kingdoms, battles won and lost,
Of new found lands, old nations spent by time!
Bold Charlemagne was lord when you were young
And Luther shook the world as you grew strong.
Columbus sailed from Spain and found new shores
Awaiting him; you gave him welcome here
Befitting him who set man's spirit free.
Embattled redskins filled our sires with fears;
You stood above the strife, secure and calm.
When Washington was called to rule our realm
You were an ancient, hoary with the years.
What sage experience! And still you stand
To note the march of freedom through our land.

Corn

Of ancient lineage am I,
Sister of the forest,
Daughter of primeval summer.
Memories of rushing buffaloes haunt me,
Red men flit across my vision.
I can tell tales of old massacres,
Of voyageurs lost but for my succour.

For me forests fall,
Railways extend themselves,
And monster shipyards arise.

For me peoples wage war
And the rivers run red.
I am astounded at the slaughter because of me,
And stand aghast at the mighty holocaust of commercial greed.
But for me all might have been peace,
With quiet fields and rustling grasses
And love songs and sunset musings.

Woe is me! They have bared me
And set me up as a queen of lust
In their drunken feast, though my days have known
But the crystal dew and the sunshine.

Woe is me! The streets are full of crying
Because of the strife of the traders,
Who have stripped and ravished me
Who am first-born daughter of summer.

Woe is me! Before the nations arose
Children played about me,
And I mingled my laughter with their singing;
Women went out to the harvest with their mates,
And there were merry-makings
And songs of ingathering.

Alas! that men have stripped me and ravished me
And have gone forth to battle for my beauty.
God will avenge me. He will strike them.
With fiery bolts from heaven shall He stop them;
And again there shall be quiet fields
And rustling grasses and sunset songs
And sweet night crooning.

Romance

I have not sung of Arcady,
Because I live there still.
I have not lauded love's sweet ways,
Nor praised the charm of summer days,
For love has not deserted me,
And summer has not ceased to be:
I have not sung of Arcady,
Because I live there still.

Humdrum

Are they worth while, these tasteless everydays,
Replete with tasks that warp the very soul?
For all this toil is there some splendid goal?
Do they speak true who have but words of praise
For those who drudge, nor lift their heads to sing,
For those who meekly yield and ask not why,
Who, tombed in walls of greed, know not the sky,
Know not the spell of dawn, the thrill of spring?
Heaven forbid! All things in earth are wrong
If toil is blest that stills the voice of song!

Pilots

When weary of the ugliness of life—
The glaring streets, the tomblike walls of grey,
The surging crowds, whose mad, unseemly strife
Becomes a wild carouse when gone the day—
What is there that can lure our thoughts away?
Keats holds the key to far-off realms of gold,
And Shelley to the isles of deathless May;
And if one seeks for some adventure bold,
"Don Juan" will steer the boat while new, strange
worlds unfold.

Release

I am weary of streets and cities,
With their palaces of plunder;
I would go where no man can fret me,
Where no gossiping tongue can beset me;
I am hungry for tempest and thunder,
For some fastness high up in the mountains.
I am tired of the rippling of fountains,
I am worn with the lilting of ditties,
I am starving for splendour and wonder!

Cities were built for dead men,
Slain by the greed of getting;
And streets were made for mad men,
For men without eyes, for sad men:
I will leave their noise and their fretting
For some height where the dawn, at breaking,
Announces strange worlds, where the shaking
And shimmering stars have led men
To dream of a heaven besetting.

Prayer of the Poor

Written in a City Park

For the joy of cool, green places,
For the smiles of kindly faces,
  We, the poor, give thanks to-day;
We, the care-beridden toilers,
We, the broken, prisoned moilers
  Would not, thankless, go our way.

But we want the scent of roses
For our joy, as each day closes,
  Lest our drudging starve our souls;
For our children give us flowers,
Give us rest and laughing hours,
  Give us homes and hearths as goals.

We would work, but not with sighing,
We would build, but not by dying—
  We are not dumb brutes, but men!
For our errors grant us pardon,
But, O Lord, let Eden garden,
  With its beauty, come again.

With Gratitude for "Leaves of Grass"

If I could sail far out upon some sea,
Or in some fronded island dwell alone,
I'd bid farewell to all anxiety,
And let one day for twenty years atone.
I'd cast across the world this heart of stone!
But since within these walls I must be pent,
I take old Walt, and read, and am content.

The Lonely Way

For every man there stretches, through the years,
A lonely way. He may have hosts of friends
Who vow to love and trust him till life ends,
Still must he walk alone the path of fears
And doubts and weariness. The way appears
To childhood's eyes a fairy path of dreams
Which, thronged with gay companions, ever seems
More richly promising and free from tears.
But manhood's dawn brings disillusionment;
Friends drop away, by circumstances prest.
By life's high noon he hastens toward the west
With face stern-set, alone, by hard bonds pent.
How happy they who can their dreams renew
When youth is past, when cherished friends are few!

The Procession

Time hurries on. We fret and cry, "Oh, stay!"
But Time replies: "We serve not yesterday;
A hundred years together must we tread;
Now would you halt, lie prostrate with the dead?
Our goal lies far beyond that distant hill,
Then on—and on; and would you now stand still?"
Time hurries on; we follow. Youth and maid
Would linger long in love's delicious shade,
But Time says no. The strong, ambitious man
Asks but for leisure to perfect his plan;
But no, Time stern replies. The hand of death
Lays low a friend; we ask, with halted breath,
For but a day to bear her to her grave;
Time frowns: "No act can now her spirit save;
Still on," he cries, "we shall not find the dawn
Till all the hours and all the days are gone."

To the Poets

As city dwellers, pent with dust and heat,
Repair to mountain heights to slake their thirst,
To feed their famished souls, so we, fret-curst,
Come to your founts to drink your wisdom sweet.
We weary of the drab and toilsome marts;
At eventide our spirits drag, forlorn;
Then what a boon to find your songs of morn,
Of buoyant hope! You lift our drooping hearts
From bitter thoughts to psalms of love and praise;
Cares fly away and trouble seeks its den,
While youth returns to light our path again;
Our feet are set upon eternal ways.
Pure Keats, blithe Burns, and Shelley, morning star,
Desert us not, who still must travel far.

To Quintus Horatius Flaccus

The hosts that royal Cæsar led
  Against a stubborn land
Were doughty and invincible
  As was his mighty hand;
But time has passed, and where are they
Who went so fearless to the fray?

Their battles are as echoes now
  And they are less than dust,
Long centuries ago their spears
  Were eaten up of rust,
And he who led so dauntlessly
Sleeps sound and long beside the sea.

But, Horace, what delight is ours
  Who read your graceful songs!
The centuries may come and go,
  But time to you belongs,
Who trusted not to gleaming spears
To light your way through deathless years.

The Builder

(Horati Carmina, Lib. III, 30)

This fair structure that I build
  Will not feel the tooth of time;
Bronze may yield to wind and frost,
  Not this work of golden rhyme.
Years shall come and years shall go,
  But my fame shall never die;
I shall live, though Juno's shrine
  In the driven dust shall lie.
Lowly was my native land,
  But for me the ages long!
Lyric muse, who touched my lips,
  Crown the king of Latin song.

The Eternal

The dust is ages deep
  On boastful Babel land,
And Cleopatra's wealth
  Is lost in drifted sand,
And paralysed for aye
  Is Cæsar's sceptred hand.

But Greece—what glory hers
  For art and mystic lore!
Old Æschylus still sings,
  And Plato opes the door
To Wisdom's high retreat
  For man—still drunk with gore.

Jerusalem, once proud,
  Is now a beggar throng;
Its walls are broken down
  Though once serenely strong;
But still the air is sweet
  With plaintive Hebrew song.

"Paradise Enow"

Give me true friends, good books, both new and old,
An afternoon of talk, serene and long;
Then add an hour for dining, one for song,
And you may take all else. My bag of gold,
My silver plate—let these be freely doled
To those who lack the prize of loving friends.
True comradeship enjoys, proud wealth pretends;
Life's choicest treasures are not bought and sold.
Thus shall I go, untroubled, down the years:
If riches fail, my friends may heed my plea,
And if I reap a heritage of tears,
Their words will calm my grief. If life should be
By Prosper blest, my days devoid of fears,—
With loyal friends, earth will be heaven for me.

The Day Is Brief

The day is brief, from dawn to dusk,
  The night is briefer still,
And life is just a going up,
  And going down, a hill.

But, oh, what dreams we dream at dawn!
  And rest, how sweet, at night!
And going down a hill is good—
  With other hills in sight!

Spectres

The splendour and the loveliness of earth
Must pass away: spring days were fleet;
Triumphant summer's glory yielded soon
Before autumnal shadows: and the boon
Of frosty morns and middays cool and sweet,
Which autumn brought, now passes, with the dearth
Of bleak November. Where the bluebird late
Announced the dawn of spring are moulding leaves
And grass; our thoughts are drab and dark.
The snow shall come to lend its cheer, but stark
And desolate the trees: fair nature grieves
Before the threat of winter. At the gate
Of every heart a spectre lifts its hands;
And every mortal sees, and seeing understands.

If Winter Comes

If winter comes, and winds blow wild and chill,
If queenly roses perish with the cold,
Be well assured that from the ashen mould
Shall bourgeon lovely gardens that shall fill
The earth with beauty. For the wood and hill,
By north wind shorn, bright robes of living green
Shall soon be wrought, unheard, unseen,
By Him who turns destruction to His will.
If winter comes—alas, and it shall come!—
Men's hearts will ache, by lonely brooding pent;
In that bleak hour shall every choir be dumb
That fills our hearts to-day with sweet content:
Yet Life still reigns, and soon the year will bring
Maytime and joy, with all things blossoming.

Lyric

When gardens die and sunshine fails
  And winds of winter blow,
'Tis time to kindle joyous fires
  And trust their friendly glow
To lead us out, by Sea o' Dreams,
  Beyond the Sunset Bar—
Then back again, to Port o' Home,
  Where love and laughter are.

Winter Harvest

When summer days were here
  And earth was arched with blue,
My heart was filled with fear,
  My head was crowned with rue.

But now that winter reigns,
  Despoiled each flower and tree,
I count the summer's gains,
  And joy abides with me.

Trust the Great Artist

Trust the Great Artist. He
Who paints the sky and sea
With shadowed blue, who clothes the land
In garb of green, and in the spring
Sets all earth blossoming—
He guides your destiny.

The magic hand
That colours dawn with flaming rose,
That ere the falling night,
For every soul's delight,
Pours out the streaming gold—
That hand, too, holds your life.

His grasp, amid the strife,
Would shape you to His will:
Let Him His wish fulfil,
What though the testings irk,
Fret not; mar not His work.

Trust the Great Artist, He
Who made the earth and sea.

Evidence

"Where is God?" inquired the mind;
"To His presence I am blind.
I can tell each blade of grass,
Read the tempests as they pass;
I have learned what metals lie
In the earth's deep mystery;
Every voice of field and wood
I have heard and understood;
Ancient secrets of the sea
Are no longer dark to me:
But the wonders of the earth
Bring no thought of God to birth."
Then the heart spake quietly,
"Hast thou thought of Calvary?"

"Where is God?" inquired the mind;
"To His presence I am blind.
I have scanned each star and sun,
Traced the certain course they run;
I have weighed them in my scale,
And can tell when each will fail;
From the caverns of the night
I have brought new worlds to light;

I have measured earth and sky,
Read each zone with steady eye:
But no sign of God appears
In the glory of the spheres."
But the heart spake wistfully,
"Hast thou measured Calvary?"

Revelation

Say not that death is king, that night is lord,
That loveliness is passing, beauty dies;
Nor tell me hope's a vain, deceptive dream
Fate lends to life, a pleasing, luring gleam
To light awhile the earth's despondent skies,
Till death brings swift and sure its dread reward.
Say not that youth deceives, but age is true,
That roses quickly pass, while cypress bides,
That happiness is foolish, grief is wise,
That stubborn dust shall choke our human cries.
Death tells new worlds, and life immortal hides
Beyond the veil, which shall all wrongs undo.
This was the tale God breathed to me at dawn
When flooding sunrise told that night was gone.

In Memory

Sleep, Rupert Brooke, of England born,
By war from your dear gardens torn;
Though far from Britain lies your mould,
The love you won shall not grow cold;
The lonely island where you rest
By every freeman shall be blest.

Sleep, Alan Seeger. You were true,
You did not fail your rendezvous.
Nor was your sacrifice in vain;
Your tragic loss was mankind's gain;
So long as earthland shall be free,
Your name shall live in memory.

Sleep, John McCrae. We heard your call;
The torch you lighted did not fall;
Inspired by your despairing breath,
We seized the sword, met hell and death,
And drove that vain and cruel foe
From Flanders Field, "where poppies blow."

Revolt

Why prattle of the pageantry of Rome?
Why celebrate anon the isles of Greece?
Is all of worth beneath some classic dome,
Or when did God bid inspiration cease?
Old Cæsar is as dead as are his slaves;
Wise Plato set no limits to men's thought;
Columbus fled from bonds and crossed the waves
To gain a lore tradition had not taught;
The Man of Galilee refused to wear
The shackles haughty priests prescribed for him,
His spirit was as free as was the air
That played about the storied Gerizim.
New thoughts, new dreams, new duties lure us on
Who hold no sunset fairer than the dawn.

In an Age of Science

The little world of olden days is gone,
A thousand universes come to light;
The eyes of science penetrate the night
And bring good tidings of eternal dawn:
There is no night, they find, there is no death,
But life begetting ever fuller life;
They look still deeper, and amid the strife
They note pervading harmony. The breath
Of morning sweeps the wastes of earth,
And we who talked of age become as gods,
Scanning the spheres, discoursing of the birth
Of countless suns. No longer human clods,
We stand alert and speak direct to Him
Who hides no more behind dumb seraphim.

Time

My name is Time. Eternity, my sire,
Appointed me to tell the flying years:
Ere nations grew, rude men, beset with fears,
Lived out their lives in caves and flooding mire;
Old Egypt rose and won resplendent fame,
Great Babylon, Assyria the proud;
Weak Macedon grew strong, then meekly bowed
Before the spell of Cæsar's mighty name;
For royal Rome smote all before her face,
Till Saxon prowess cast her legions down.
They come and go, these nations of renown—
And I abide, who have no biding place.
Time flies? Not so; for I remain to say
That all are dead who flourished yesterday.

The Melting Pot

When brave Ulysses left his native isle
To sail the shining main, to seek new shores
And unknown countries, bursting golden doors
To fair new realms that basked in summer's smile,
He saw no stranger sights than we to-day
In these our city streets, where earth has poured
From every farthest land her human horde:
Proud Nipponese, sojourners from Cathay,
Shrewd Greeks, and Turks, and roving Syrians;
Gay Spanish dons and dour Scotch peasantry,
High-hearted French, dark rogues from Barbary;
No race or breed is barred by selfish bans.
Here, where the dream of liberty had birth,
God dreams His dream, democracy for earth.

Upon Reading a Volume of Ancient Chinese Poetry

And here, in this old book, we find discussed
The themes we choose to-day: business and toil,
Knowledge and fame, weariness born of moil,
Daydreams of youth, visions of love and lust;
Whether it pays to work that one may live,
Whether it pays to live, if work is all;
How one may think great thoughts in one room small,
How one may gain great wealth, if he but give;
Here one may learn the foolishness of pride,
The curse of gold; and here are saintly prayers
For high celestial joys: by mystic stairs
These old philosophers and poets tried
To burst the doors of heaven, as do we—
And as they will who after us shall be.

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